



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

June 7, 2005

News Release

ICE DEPORTS 34 HAITIAN CRIMINAL ALIENS

New Orleans Detention and Removal Officers work closely with Haitian Government

NEW ORLEANS — The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office here Monday deported 34 Haitian criminal aliens who were illegally living in the United States.

The deported Haitians, who had exhausted their legal appeals, were flown to Port au Prince by government aircraft.

Craig Robinson, field office director for ICE New Orleans Detention and Removal Operations, noted the cooperative effort with Haiti which helped with the transfer. "The Haitian government provided outstanding support to help us make this an especially successful mission," he said.

In preparation for the flight, five high-ranking members of the Haitian government traveled to New Orleans a week before departure. The officials conducted travel document interviews for the Haitian ICE detainees, explained the removal process, and contacted detainee family members. This preparation facilitated a smooth release to family members upon arrival in Haiti.

"We work closely with numerous countries using ICE's unique enforcement tools, including the immigration laws, to promote a higher level of security here at home. Our number-one priority is removing criminal aliens from the United States." Robinson heads the ICE New Orleans Detention and Removal Operations office, which includes the five-state area of: Louisiana, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee.



Haitians board a government aircraft in New Orleans in preparation for their repatriation flight to Port au Prince

The government of Haiti worked with U.S. officials to authorize travel documents for the criminal aliens, and coordinate logistics for the flight. "The travel document unit, the Department of State personnel and the budget folks all worked very hard to make this major logistical effort come to fruition," said Robinson. The Plaquemines' Sheriff's Department and other government agencies were instrumental in completing this mission successfully. "The coordination involved was first-rate and provided us a template to use in future operations."

This repatriation represents the latest in a series of collaborations between Haiti and the U.S. within the last few years. As a result, ICE has successfully repatriated more than 460 Haitian nationals from throughout the United States. Sixty-nine percent of those removed were convicted of crimes in the U.S.

These deportations demonstrate ICE's commitment to restoring integrity to the nation's immigration system, which is reflected in a record year of deportations. ICE formally removed more than 161,000 aliens nationally in fiscal year 2004. More than half of those were criminal aliens.

The Haitians deported yesterday traveled via government aircraft run by the U.S. Marshal Service, called the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System (JPATS). JPATS is one of the largest transporters of prisoners in the world and handles hundreds of requests every day to move prisoners and criminal aliens nationally and internationally.

There is an automatic 10-year bar against deported aliens from legally re-entering the U.S. "Anyone caught in the U.S. by any law enforcement office after having been previously deported will be presented by ICE officers to the U.S. Attorney for prosecution," said Robinson. "Reentry after deportation is a felony that can carry a possible 20-year prison sentence."

ICE

ICE, the primary investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, was established to bring a unified focus to the enforcement of U.S. immigration and customs laws, with the principal goal of preventing violations by terrorists and other criminals who threaten the nation's security.